

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06
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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8724

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 SANTIAGO 2393

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV PINT SHUM CI
SUBJECT: PRESSURES TO ACCELERATE CHILEAN TRANSITION PLAN BUILDING

REF: SANTIAGO 2036

1. SUMMARY: PRESIDENT PINOCHET HAS ANNOUNCED THAT HE WILL MAKE A MAJOR ADDRESS THE WEEK OF APRIL 3. THERE IS WIDE-SPREAD SPECULATION THAT THE PRESIDENT WILL ACCELERATE AT LEAST PARTS OF HIS TRANSITION PLAN. SPECULATION HAS IT THAT PINOCHET BELIEVES HE MUST TAKE THE OFFENSIVE THIS WAY IN ORDER TO RIDE OUT HIS CURRENT PROBLEMS. GENERAL LEIGH HAS BEEN KEEPING UP THE PRESSURE THROUGH A SERIES OF SPEECHES WHICH THE MEDIA HAVE IMPLICITLY ENDORSED. BUT ADMIRAL MERINO FAILED TO SUPPORT LEIGH IN A RECENT SPEECH. THE ARMY HIGH COMMAND, IN AN UNUSUAL MOVE, PUBLICLY ENDORSED PINOCHET'S LEADERSHIP OF THE ARMY AND THE COUNTRY, THEREBY DRAWING ATTENTION TO DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE JUNTA. IN THE PAST, PINOCHET'S SPEECHES HAVE FALLEN SHORT OF EXPECTATIONS. END SUMMARY.

2. AIR FORCE GENERAL LEIGH FOLLOWED UP HIS AIR FORCE DAY SPEECH (REFTEL) WITH A YET MORE POINTED ONE BEFORE THE LOCAL ROTARY MARCH 22. HE WARNED AGAINST PUTTING FAITH IN "STRONG GOVERNMENTS DIRECTED BY OMNIPOTENT LEADERS"
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AS A LONG RUN SOLUTION. HE SAID THAT "THE CITIZENRY HAS THE RIGHT, AND THE DUTY, TO ORGANIZE ITSELF IN DEFENSE AGAINST TOTALITARIANISM OF LEFT OR RIGHT... THE PEOPLE HAVE STOCIALLY SUPPORTED THE ARMED FORCES AND SACRIFICED THEMSELVES FOR THE COUNTRY. NOW WE (THE AIR FORCE) THINK THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION STAGE OUGHT TO COME SOON." SPEAKING BEFORE A UNIVERSITY CROWD IN VALPARIASO MARCH 26 LEIGH

AGAIN REFERRED TO THE NEED FOR SEPARATION OF POWERS, A STRONG "CONTRALORIA" AND THE RULE OF LAW.

3. CORNERED BY THE PRESS DURING A RECEPTION MARCH 30, LEIGH SAID THAT HE HAD DIFFERENCES OF VIEW WITH BOTH PINOCHET AND MERINO, BUT THAT THEY WERE BEING FRANKLY AND OPENLY ADDRESSED WITHIN THE JUNTA. HE SAID THAT HE WANTED TO STEP-UP THE PACE OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION AND HE WOULD PRESENT HIS THOUGHTS FORMALLY TO THE JUNTA. IN RESPONSE TO A DIRECT QUESTION, LEIGH SAID THAT HE WAS NOT RECOMMENDING ELECTIONS SOON, SINCE HE DID NOT THINK THAT CHILE WAS NOW READY FOR THEM. HEAD OF THE JUNTA'S PLANNING AND COORDINATION COMMITTEE (COAJ) TOLD THE AMBASSADOR MARCH 31 THAT HE WAS AWAITING LEIGH'S FORMAL PROPOSALS.

4. LEIGH'S CAMPAIGN DREW EXTENSIVE, AND FAVORABLE, COVERAGE IN THE WRITTEN PRESS AND WAS FULLY REPORTED BY THE ELECTRONIC MEDIA.

5. ON MARCH 29 THE ARMY HIGH COMMAND MADE PUBLIC A RESOLUTION IT HAD PASSED UNANIMOUSLY DURING ITS CURRENT SESSIONS. THE GENERALS "GAVE THEIR FULLEST SUPPORT" TO PINOCHET BOTH AS CHIEF OF THE ARMY AND PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC. IN AN OBVIOUS SWIPE AT LEIGH, THE GENERALS SAID THAT IN SUPPORT OF PINOCHET THEY "WOULD NOT PERMIT ATTEMPTS TO CAUSE PROBLEMS OR HINDER THE PATH THAT HAS BEEN PUT FORWARD
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FOR THE INSTITUTIONALIZATION OF THE COUNTRY (I.E., PINOCHET'S CHACARRILAS SCHEME)."

6. ALSO ON MARCH 29, PINOCHET WAS QUOTED AS BEING CONTENT WITH LEIGH'S REMARKS "BECAUSE THERE IS A COINCIDENCE OF OPINION, SINCE GENERAL LEIGH IS MERELY REPEATING WHAT I HAVE ALREADY SAID."

7. EXPECTATIONS TURNED TO A SPEECH ADMIRAL MERINO WAS TO MAKE BEFORE THE LOCAL LIONS CLUB MARCH 30. MANY EXPECTED HIM TO SIDE WITH LEIGH. BUT IN THE EVENT MERINO SAID VERY LITTLE. BY NOT ADDRESSING THE QUESTION OF INSTITUTIONALIZATION HE IMPLICITLY LEFT LEIGH ALONE ON THE LIMB. MERINO CONCENTRATED INSTEAD ON THE "PERPLEXING" LACK OF SYMPATHY FOR CHILE BY ITS MANY TRADITIONAL FRIENDS IN THE HEMISPHERE.

8. THE SAME DAY, THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS CIRCULATED A

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 SANTIAGO 2393

FLYER LINKING CHILE'S INTERNATIONAL PROBLEMS TO THE
ABSENCE OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT, WHICH IS RESPONSIBLE
FOR CHILE'S REJECTION BY WORLD POWERS. THUS PROMPT
RETURN TO DEMOCRACY IS THE BEST WAY TO PROTECT THE
NATIONAL SECURITY.

9. IN A MAJOR ADDRESS TO LABOR LEADERS MARCH 30 (SEE
SEPTTEL) PINOCHET INDICATED THAT HE WOULD BE ADVANCING THE
DATE HE WOULD CIRCULATE A PROPOSED NEW CONSTITUTION. ON
THE OTHER HAND, HIS SPEECH WAS FILLED WITH WARNINGS TO THE
POLITICIANS NOT TO EXPECT HIM TO HURRY THE BASIC TRANSITION
PROGRAM.

10. NIGHT OF MARCH 30 A PDC LEADER TOLD AN EMBOFF THAT
ACCORDING TO A SOLID SOURCE PINOCHET WAS STUDYING A PLAN
DRAFTED AT HIS REQUEST BY GENERALS BENAVIDES, FORESTIER,
VIDAL AND CORVARRUBIAS. THE ANALYSIS REPORTEDLY CLAIMED
VARIOUS FORCES WANT PINOCHET OUT (CITING THE USG,
CATHOLIC CHURCH, OPPOSITION POLITICIANS, AIR FORCE AND
NAVY). THUS PINOCHET SHOULD TAKE THE OFFENSIVE BY
MAKING HIMSELF THE IRREPLACEABLE LEADER OF AN ACCELERATED
TRANSITION PLAN FEATURING: A) RETURN TO JURIDICAL NORMALITY
BY SEPTEMBER 1978; B) LAUNCHING OF A NEW CONSTITUTION BY
YEAR END; C) FORMATION OF A CONGRESS BASED UPON THE
COUNCIL OF STATE WITH ADDITIONAL MEMBERS (PERHAPS ELECTED);
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AND D) PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS BY SEPTEMBER 1979. A
HIGH LEVEL COMMISSION WOULD THEN APPROACH THE USG AND
PROMISE TO TAKE WHATEVER STEPS WE THOUGHT NECESSARY TO

IMPROVE RELATIONS SHORT OF CHANGING THE NEW TIMETABLE OF
SUGGESTING THAT PINOCHET NOT HEAD THE PROCESS.

11. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY CAUTIONS AGAINST TAKING ANY
OF THE FOREGOING TOO MUCH TO HEART. TOO MANY TIMES IN
THE PAST SUCH RUMORS GREATLY EXAGGERATED THE IMPORT OF
ACTUAL EVENTS. NONETHELESS, THINGS ARE STIRRING AT
DIEGO PORTALES, THE PRESSURES FOR SOME DRAMATIC ANNOUNCE-
MENT SEEM TO HAVE IRRESTIBLE MOMENTUM.
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